SOME IDEAS ON HOW TO MAKE FM MORE POPULAR

WITH ADVERTISERS AND THE RADIO AUDIENCE

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ADVERTISERS

To our knowledge there is only limited commercial use made of FM broadcasting in northern and central California, except on those stations which broadcast FM as an adjunct to their AM broadcasting, and in those cases the AM broadcasts are those the advertiser is interested in.

Purchasers of radio time, especially in these days when sales are getting much harder to make, want to get their full dollar's worth. They want facts about available audience, kind of audience, cost per listener, impact of message, programming for sales of their particular product or service, etc. Basing their judgment on this information, and comparing these facts with facts about other media, they buy the radio time which seems to them to offer the most per dollar spent. Those radio stations which give prospective advertisers the most hard facts about their depth of penetration in the consumer market are those which receive the most business. This will be increasingly true in the months to come. Competition between the various media is becoming more intense than it has been for the past eight years.

It seems to us that there are advantages offered by FM stations which cannot be duplicated by AM stations. Some of these advantages are:

1) Interference-Free Listening.

You know better than we the technical advantages of FM over AM radio in giving the listener smooth reception, free from extraneous noise. The psychological advantage to the advertiser in getting his program and his sales message to listeners in the most pleasing way are quite great.

2) Better Programming.

FM radio is becoming known as "quality radio." This is not to say that FM is known as "stuffed shirt radio," because this is not so. But, generally speaking, FM radio has not been plagued with the devices used by short-sighted advertisers and program directors which have been condemned by many influential groups such as the Parent-Teachers Association, General Federation of Women's Clubs, many church groups, various radio listeners councils and by others interested in full-valued entertainment and education.

3) An Important Companion to Television.

FM is the voice of television. As television grows, so will FM. This is already evident. Many persons who own television receiving sets have become familiar with FM for the first time. And predictions in trade journals

are that even the least expensive television sets manufactured in the future will carry the full FM band. When this takes place it is not an exaggeration to say that most of the population of the country will hear all radio by FM. AM broadcasting will become an unimportant adjunct to television and FM, useful only in beaming programs to those beyond the range of FM. While this is not an immediate possibility, it will be important to thoughtful advertisers interested in long-range gains.

4) Focused Impact.

At present those people who listen to FM radio are relatively few compared with the number who hear AM broadcasts exclusively. This fact, at the present time, should be turned into an asset for FM stations.

Those who listen to FM radio now are "fans" in the true sense of the word. Our own experience and listening habits are adequate proof to us of that. Some thousands of persons in the northern and central California area now do a major part of their listening to radio over FM facilities. While the number is not large compared with those who hear AM radio only it is more important to advertisers than they realize. First, FM listeners at the present time are mostly in the higher income brackets. Second, FM listeners feel a greater identity with FM programming than AM listeners do with AM programming. Third, where surveys and tests have been made FM listeners have a greater response to programs listened to than do AM listeners.

In our opinion it is quite accurate to say that certain advertisers at the present time would get more results per dollar spent by using FM than they would by using AM radio.

5) Lower Time Costs.

Time on FM is enough lower than AM radio time rates to appeal to many advertisers who need to use radio but who haven't because they haven't been able to afford it.

FM radio should never get the reputation for being "cheap" radio in the more limited sense. But advertisers wishing to reach a radio audience, especially in the more heavily populated centers, should be made aware of the rate differential between FM and AM radio and should be informed of the several advantages of FM over AM.

An aggressive campaign on behalf of FM radio among prospective advertisers and advertising agencies would go far toward impelling commercial use of FM radio by an ever-larger number of purchasers of

radio time. Such a campaign must be based on a presentation of the facts about FM radio and must be accompanied by an intensive effort to acquaint the public with the value of FM. Here are some of the facts which must be made known to advertisers and their agencies:

1) The number of people now in the available FM audience.

This is a basic fact--one which will surprise many advertising agency people and advertisers, and also one which we predict will surprise many who own and operate FM stations. This information is perhaps hard come by, but it is not impossible to get. When it is collected it should be used in every local and area FM sales message. Care must be taken not to compare this figure with the much larger AM listener total. The FM figure should be used rather in selective selling and in presentations to agencies.

At present it is doubtful if anyone knows the available FM audience in northern and central California. Until this information is gathered it will be very hard to sell many advertisers on the use of FM radio.

2) The number of FM stations and their geographical and population coverage.

This is another fact known to only a few persons in the area. Most advertisers and their agencies are generally aware that there are FM stations in northern and central California. But very few know their call letters, their location, what their rates are, who owns and operates them, what range they have, what their programming is, what services they are able to perform, etc. This is particularly true of those stations which are FM only.

3) Listener response to FM programs.

From our investigations we have learned that FM listener response and sponsor identity is much higher than it is to AM radio. Where tests and surveys have been made in northern and central California this has been universally true. For example: one Bay Area FM station received more than 4,000 requests for its program guide within a short time after announcing that one was available. The same station received more than 1,500 responses to a detailed questionnaire it mailed to approximately 3,000 listeners. Another Bay Area FM station had a 65 per cent response to a questionnaire it sent to listeners. The number of such responses would be considered very good by even the largest of the AM stations.

Those few commercial sponsors of FM programs have already received the benefits of this listener response and loyalty. Several such sponsors are now using FM radio in preference to AM radio, or along with AM, after learning how FM can increase their sales. Such case histories should be widely used to inform potential advertisers of the response to FM.

An added factor in listener response is the fact that FM listeners generally tune to an FM station, or to FM programs, through several evening listening hours without interruption or distraction.

4) The ever-increasing number of FM sets in use.

Compared with a year ago, or even with a few months ago, there is a far greater number of FM sets in use today. There are two main reasons for this: (1) Listeners, and particularly the more discriminating ones, are gradually becoming aware of FM radio and (2) television is almost automatically creating FM listeners. An added factor is the more widespread promotion of FM sets or AM-FM sets by radio manufacturers, distributors, dealers and retailers.

As more persons in the radio audience are convinced that they should be hearing FM, and as television grows in this area throughout the coming year, FM will become increasingly valuable to advertisers. Building this FM audience is one of the most important parts of the program to get more commercial sponsorship of FM programs.

5) Habits, income level, distribution and other facts about the FM audience.

Many facts fall under this heading: Where do they live? What kinds of programs do they like? What is their purchasing power? What kinds of radio sets do they own? What do they think of radio generally? How late do they listen? Is there any specific age level of listeners? Why do they listen to FM? How much do they listen to AM? All of these questions and many more should have answers if FM radio is to be sold widely to commercial sponsors of radio shows.

Finding the answers to these questions need not be costly, nor should FM stations attempt to compete with the very detailed surveys of this nature issued by AM stations and networks. The average purchaser of radio time doesn't want to know how many dishes of Bloopsies are eaten by eight year old children in the 500 block of Hallowton Street in Milpitas as a result of a 15 minute show on KBLO, but he does want to know generally what kind of an audience

he can reach. And he wants straight talk rather than fancy presentations of expensive padded surveys. FM should make this kind of honest information available to him.

It is our belief that a public relations program carrying these and other facts about FM to advertising agencies and advertisers would result in much greater use of FM facilities by purchasers of radio time--provided the program was imaginatively conceived and carried on diligently over a period of time.

LISTENERS

Obviously, the more listeners who are attracted to FM radio, the better will be the possibilities for selling FM time to advertisers. Securing an ever-increasing number of FM listeners becomes one of the most important parts of the job of convincing advertisers to use FM. This is completely aside and apart from the fact that those who are persuaded to hear FM are led into a much better radio world.

At present many thousands of radio listeners are not aware of the benefits of FM. A great many are only vaguely aware of the existence of FM stations in the area. Many, even, who have an FM band on their radio sets either don't know what FM is or have not yet been told of the infinite variety of programs they can receive by FM. These are only a few facts which we have learned by conducting a limited telephone survey in San Francisco and Oakland. The most interesting thing to us about the results of this cursory survey is the tremendous area of ignorance about FM in the radio audience, even among those who have FM bands on their radio sets.

It seems to us that FM stations in northern and central California could profitably conduct an intensive campaign to make radio listeners aware of the facts about FM. This would serve a two-fold purpose: (1) It would result in an addition of many thousands to the FM audience and (2) it would serve to show potential purchasers of FM time that the FM stations were making a diligent attempt to increase the number of their listeners.

Following are a few suggestions for enlarging the FM audience:

1) Use of newspaper space.

At present very few daily or weekly newspapers in northern and central California carry an FM log. Some papers will mention specific FM programs once in a while but that's about all. It should not be too difficult to persuade most papers to carry an FM log and to give more frequent

mention to FM programming and activities, especially if FM listeners would write letters to the newspapers asking that this be done. If this project were to be handled in an organized fashion it would bring more results than have been achieved to date.

If it can be afforded, some newspaper space should be bought occasionally to tell the FM story.

The effect which should be created by use of newspaper space should be that of giving those who don't listen to FM programs the feeling that they're missing something very good and very important to them.

2) Use of the present FM audience.

Most persons who listen to FM now are much more loyal to it than are AM listeners to AM radio. For that reason it should be possible to use many persons in the present FM audience as volunteer public relations people in the campaign to gain more FM listeners. I know that I have told scores of my friends and business acquaintances about FM programs I listen to and have convinced a number of them to buy FM tuners and new AM-FM sets. I believe this has been the case with many other people who enjoy FM reception. If this loyalty was organized it would be a powerful means of increasing the FM audience at little cost to the FM stations.

It has always been our experience that a public relations campaign which involved large numbers of people was much more successful than one which depended solely on a small staff of paid personnel. Campaigns in which large numbers of people are involved are more human--a friend telling another friend is more effective than a stranger telling another person. Such campaigns, augmented by printed materials and by use of the best media, convince thousands of people in a short time at the lowest possible cost to those who wish the campaign conducted.

The present body of FM listeners should be considered a reservoir from which to draw many thousands of willing volunteer workers in a campaign to get more people to listen to FM. This phase of the campaign should be carefully planned and executed to get the most results.

3) Use of manufacturers, distributors, dealers and retailers of radio sets and recordings.

The radio set industry is more than ever looking for ways to increase their sales. You are familiar with the present condition of the radio and television set market. Much of

the blame for the current bad market rests on the head of the industry itself. This is especially true of television sets. But there seems to be an honest realization of some of the mistakes which have been made recently, and some attempts are now being made to rectify them. Because this is so it seems to us that many sections of the radio set industry can be persuaded to help in a campaign to promote a larger FM audience. It would bring them added business at a time when they badly need it and it would help increase the number of those who hear FM.

A cooperative promotional program worked out between FM stations and the radio set manufacturers, distributors, dealers and retailers would perform three functions: (1) It would focus attention on FM radio and the FM stations in the area in scores of places of business where consumers visit; (2) it would result in the sale of many new FM tuners and AM-FM sets; and (3) it would help explain the close relationship between FM and television.

A similar cooperative program can be worked out with the manufacturers, distributors, dealers and retailers of recordings. Sales of recordings have dropped. In the face of this drop a number of retailers of recordings have bought time on FM stations throughout the country and the results have been pleasing to them. The FM audience has a great potential in sales to the record industry--greater, perhaps, than that of any other single section of the population. So it's to the interest of the record industry to increase the FM audience.

4) Use of public service features and community programs.

A few FM stations in the country have become well known for their consistent programming of public service features and programs of wide community interest. Such programs cannot make up a large amount of FM time because they are sustainers. But by proper use of such programs FM stations can become widely known, respected and listened to by thousands of persons who tune them in to get information and education on problems affecting their daily life.

In our opinion AM stations have, in the main, failed to do this important public service job and have by this failure become impersonal agencies in the community, rather than becoming important parts of community life. FM has the opportunity which AM has missed. Taken now, this opportunity can bring thousands of new listeners to FM. There is a great deal with which I disagree in Charles Siepmann's book "Radio's Second Chance," a study of FM made several years ago, but this is one point he makes that I heartily agree with. It makes good sense from the viewpoint of community service and also from the viewpoint of business success.

5) New developments in reaching large numbers of listeners through FM.

FM is well adapted for transmission of entertainment, education and news to large numbers of people in places of work, on public transportation conveyances and in schools and other institutions. FM has already been used effectively in all of these ways. It is our understanding that a large manufacturer of radio sets will also have an auto FM radio on the market within the next few months, thus bringing interference-free radio reception to motorists for the first time. These and other new developments in the field of FM will make the job of increasing the FM audience simpler all the time.

6) Use of other media for telling the FM story to the general public.

Obviously, every way possible should be used to increase the number of FM listeners. Careful use should be made, within budgetary limits, of every practical medium for getting the FM message across.

Printed folders and posters which can be distributed and displayed in record shops, stores where radio sets are sold and at other public places would be useful in reaching thousands of potential listeners. Many organizations would welcome speakers on FM. Organizations such as church groups, women's clubs, music and opera associations, student bodies, labor unions, civic groups, professional societies and trade and business associations will be interested in hearing about FM and its public service features and community programs and will tell their members about them. Use of each of these and many other methods to influence more people to listen to FM will cost little and will bring satisfying results.

You have undoubtedly already considered many of the suggestions made here. We have attempted to present you with our thinking about FM broadcasting in this area not so much to bring you any new ideas but rather to lay before you the thoughts of individuals who are not closely connected with FM broadcasting. We have conducted a number of regional and statewide advertising and public relations campaigns in California during the past few years and have rarely been so impressed with the possibilities for a successful campaign as we are with those inherent in FM promotion. One reason for this, of course, is that the job needs doing so badly. But that's a negative reason. Far more important to us is the future we see in FM broadcasting and the pleasure which so many people will get when they start to hear FM programs.

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